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AN IMPARTIAL

STATE

OF THE

CASE

OF THE

French COMEDIANS, &c.

[Price Six-pence.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN IMPARTIAL

STATE

OF THE

CASE

OF THE

French COMEDIANS, ACTORS, PLAYERS, *or* STROLLERS,

Who lately opened a

THEATRE

AT THE

HAY-MARKET.

IN WHICH

Some NOTICE is taken of another SET, now occupying that THEATRE.

In a LETTER from a GENTLEMAN in Town, to his Friend in the Country.

Plus apud nos, vera ratio valeat, quam opinio vulgi. CIC.

LONDON:

Printed for M. SHEPEY, under the *Royal-Exchange*; R. SPAVAN, at the *Crown* in *Ivy-lane*, near *Pater-noster-row*; W. MEER, in *May's-building*, *St. Martin's-lane*; G. WOODFALL, at the Corner of *Craig's-court*, *Charing-cross*; and at the *Court of Requests*. MDCC L.

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An Impartial STATE *of the* CASE *of the* French COMEDIANS, *&c.*

SIR,

IN compliance with your deſire to know the real foundation and grounds of all the noiſe and clamour which has been raiſed, and induſtriouſly fomented, againſt a company of *French* players; or, if you pleaſe, ſtrollers, who lately opened their theatre in the *Haymarket*, I ſit down to give you as juſt and impartial account as may be expected from one perfectly indifferent to either ſide of the queſtion; and who, ſeeking nothing but your information, has no aim but truth, and doing juſtice to both ſides.

It is on theſe principles I am to acquaint you, that the party which oppoſed the encouragement and toleration of theſe *French* comedians, may, very properly, be divided into two diſtinct claſſes or ſets.

The one of true *Engliſhmen*, who on national principles, and from a jealouſy of foreigners being preferred to their own countrymen, and the conſequences of ſuch a preference being farther extended, expreſſed a reſentment and indignation, ſo far laudable as they were actuated by thoſe motives.

The other claſs conſiſted of ſuch, as, being acquainted with the force of this popular prejudice, ſeized and preſſed it into their ſervice, on

the occaſion of the late *Weſtminſter* election. But, whatever other were the motives for endeavouring to ſet aſide the firſt candidate (and it is foreign here to my purpoſe to enter into them;) the cry againſt *French* ſtrollers was ſtrained to an exceſs, and, in truth, made a very unfair and diſingenuous uſe of, to ſerve party-purpoſes and party-paſſions.

As to the firſt diviſion; all that I ſhall preſume to ſay, is, that the very nature of their prejudices, takes birth from ſo juſt and virtuous a motive, that they will not at leaſt be offended at an attempt to reaſon them out of a reſentment they have been led into by the groſſeſt impoſition, and the moſt unfair arts; and, if they do change their opinion, it will be only becauſe they will ſee greater reaſon to perſiſt in it, than what is brought againſt it: and this is no more than fair.

But as to thoſe who have ſowed, or at leaſt cultivated, all theſe ſeeds of ſourneſs, and have improved the hint to the uſe of their party; they will undoubtedly affect to withſtand conviction, even whilſt they cannot but inwardly laugh at the innocence and ſimplicity of ſuch, as they could paſs ſo trifling a circumſtance upon for a national point, by magnifying a butterfly into a dragon, that was to ſwallow up their liberties and properties.

For can any thing be imagined more derogatory, more unworthy of the greatneſs of this nation, than, that the tolerating, or non-tolerating, of a parcel of *French* comedians (and the argument is ſtill ſtronger, if you call them ſtrollers)

lers) ſhould be made a national concern, and ſounded forth as a matter of conſequence either way? Surely ſuch a public outcry againſt foreigners can ſcarce deſcend lower, without it falls upon the *Savoyards* who go about this great capital with their magic-lanthorns, puppet-ſhews, marmottes, catherines, *&c.*

How different, however, is this ſpirit from that old *Britiſh* one, which, ſo far from diſcouraging foreigners, gave them the ſtrongeſt invitation to come and ſettle in this country! where almoſt all that we have of trade, arts and ſciences, is owing to that generous and enlarged way of thinking in our anceſtors. By this means *England* became the country of mankind; whilſt its own natives were ſo far from injured or damaged by this excellent policy, that, they not only learned the arts and ſciences which foreigners imported, but have ſo greatly improved on almoſt all, eſpecially the moſt uſeful, that ſuch as are fools enough to prefer the works of foreigners to that of their own countrymen, are at leaſt to be as much pitied as blamed. To ſuch, indeed, an elector in any way of buſineſs or trade, that he ſaw a foreigner preferred to himſelf in, might, and ought, to refuſe his vote: as why ſhould an *Engliſh* tradeſman ſupport ſuch as do not ſupport him?

But, at the ſame time, by a very juſt diſtinction, a tradeſman ſhould not care for making a common cauſe with either *Engliſh* actors or with *Engliſh* ſtrollers.

With *Engliſh* actors, becauſe it is to be hoped they are above any competition with an itinerant troop; and, even ſuppoſing that our regularly-licenſed actors did not greatly exceed theſe *French* ones, why rob them then of the benefit which emulation never fails to produce? Why rob the public too, of the benefit of that emulation, which, according to the nature and courſe of things, might put the managers of the two theatres on their mettle, and, for their intereſt, engage them to bring on new plays, and to have the old ones better acted, inſtead of laying the whole ſtreſs of the drama upon two or three characters only?

As to *Engliſh* ſtrollers, ſurely no reputable tradeſman will make their cauſe his own: ſince it would certainly be rather an affront to him, to put him, in any ſenſe, on a level with them, than to make that difference which the laws, as well as the common-ſenſe of all mankind, have agreed to eſtabliſh. Inſomuch that *No Engliſh ſtrollers*, would be, perhaps, a more ſenſible cry, than *No French ſtrollers*; from this plain principle, that a true *Engliſhman* would be glad to ſee his countrymen employed in a more creditable and induſtrious vocation: as for example. When one ſees an *Italian* eunuch, earning, dearly indeed, a tranſient applauſe, and a ſeeming large ſalary, with the loſs of his manhood, what *Engliſhman* but muſt be pleaſed to think, that the more humane laws of his country have guarded againſt ſo villainous and ſo cruel a practice? or could he wiſh this bread

not

not taken out of his countrymen's mouths, if they were reduced to come at it by ſo infamous a ſacrifice? If an *Engliſh* ſhoemaker, taylor, barber, or, in ſhort, any honeſt mechanic, was to complain, that their reſpective trades ſtagnated by the employing foreigners, he might expect not only to be heard with tenderneſs, but to have his complaint redreſſed, as far as the laws and liberties of the nation would admit: and he would have the juſteſt reaſon to mark out the man who ſhould oppoſe ſuch a redreſs, for an enemy to his own intereſt, and, indeed, that of his country. But will ſtrollers have the impudence to arrogate to themſelves what even we ſee the followers of legal trades and vocations are extremely modeſt and reſerved in? Shall ſtrollers preſume to mix their little, dirty concerns with thoſe of the nation? and ſet up an alarm, becauſe a few gentlemen, who underſtand the *French* language, and the foreigners who abound in this large and populous town, have a mind to be diverted in it, and that in a moſt innocent, inoffenſive manner. The ſtrollers too! I ſay, who, of all the men on earth, have the moſt reaſon to acknowledge the lenity and tenderneſs of the government: for, unleſs upon ſome extraordinary motive, or reaſon ſhewn, againſt their *acting in contempt of the law*, which has confined the repreſentation of plays to the two theatres; when have they been hindered from murdering our beſt pieces at diſcretion,

under

under no other nor better colour, than giving a play *gratis*, between the Muſics?

The legiſlature has indeed, for reaſons intirely wide of any regard for foreigners, reſtrained the *Engliſh* theatres in this capital to the number of two: but then, this act was paſſed for conſiderations purely relative to the repreſentations made of the inconveniencies, and injuries done, not only to the theatrical, but even the public intereſt, and good government, by a greater number being ſuffered. But will the moſt impudent ſtroller that ever exiſted, and who may complain of this act as a limitation of his noble profeſſion; will he, I ſay, dare to inſinuate, that this limitation will extend to trades uſeful, and beneficial to ſociety, when the very reaſon of this limitation is, that *his* is *not*? Can he go to an honeſt perukemaker, weaver, taylor, or any other craftſman, and ſay, "You ſee how *we* are uſed; it will be "your turn next." And yet, by the clamour theſe, eſpecially ſtrollers, have headed on this occaſion, and even drawn many honeſt, well-meaning tradeſman into, one may very juſtly ſay, that induſtry and ſobriety have taken the part of idleneſs and debauchery, or, at leaſt, have appeared not ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed from them; ſince nothing can be a falſer inference, than that becauſe foreigners are admitted to an equal chance for bread with ſtrollers, they will likewiſe meet with the ſame favour, to the prejudice of the honeſt, induſtrious, native tradeſman. They are, and, I hope, ever will be, two diſtinct and ſepa-

rate

rate intereſts. The ſtrollers have no reaſon to grumble if they are barely tolerated: the *Engliſh* tradeſman cannot be too much encouraged and cheriſhed.

Inſtead of which, as the caſe now ſtands, the ſtrollers ſeem not to repreſent, but to demand as their right, a preference over all trades and buſineſſes whatever; and that the laws and liberties of this nation ſhall even be violated for the ſake of their intereſt. The peace has poured in upon us a ſwarm of indigent, needy *French* mechanics of all ſorts; yet where is the *Engliſh* tradeſman, who makes any oppoſition to them, unleſs by excelling them in their reſpective arts or profeſſions? A thinking, ſenſible mechanic knows very well, that this is a free country, where all foreigners whatever, not at war with us, or demeaning themſelves as peaceable ſubjects during the time of their reſidence, are allowed to ſeek their ſubſiſtence, under proper limitations; he knows too, that whatever inconvenience this liberty is more or leſs attended with to *ſome particular perſons*, it has been productive of the greateſt general good to this nation; and that arts and ſciences would never have arrived to the pitch we ſee them at, had our forefathers been actuated or influenced by that narrow prejudice and cry againſt foreigners coming and ſettling amongſt us, who brought their honey with them. This let the *French* refugee, and their deſcendants atteſt; whom even the cauſe of religion could not defend at firſt againſt the popular jealouſy, and averſion to ſtrangers; yet, who is not ſenſible

ſible, that, not only in *England*, but wherever they went, deſtitute and dependent as numbers of them were on the charity of the nations they were diſperſed into, they richly repaid the refuge granted them, by the diſcoveries of their arts, and the ſpirit of commerce and induſtry they brought with them? inſomuch that ſome of the wealthieſt families, and the moſt zealous, and well-affected ſubjects to the preſent conſtitution, are to be found amongſt their deſcendants. This, I own, ſeems, at firſt, no manner of argument in favour of admitting foreign actors, or ſtrollers: nor is it here uſed, but only to thoſe who have a real, or affect, from deſign, a pretended averſion to them, not as *actors*, or *ſtrollers*, but as *foreigners*, coming to eat the bread out of our countrymens mouths; which was ſpecifically the very clamour urged againſt the admiſſion of the *French* refugees, by the mob indeed only, and very wiſely over-ruled by better judges of the national good.

But even that clamour how falſe! as to any hurt or prejudice done to thoſe ſtrollers who have chiefly raiſed it; though others of greater importance have vouchſafed to catch it up? ſince, moſt certainly, the ſtrollers can loſe few or no cuſtomers by ſuch as encourage, or like, for variety, to ſee a *French* play. It does not ſurely follow, that thoſe who underſtand that language, and may now and then allow themſelves ſuch a diverſion; that, if they had it not, they would be reduced ſo low, as to

mur-

murder their time and money at ſuch ſorry entertainments as ſtrollers generally afford: and, if a good play is to be ſpoilt, one would rather ſee it ſerved ſo in another language than in our own. For, as to the *licenſed* theatres, they are intirely out of the queſtion: as I preſume their principles would ſcorn to have their merit lugged into a compariſon; or that their intereſt ſhould be made a handle to debar ſome of their beſt patrons and ſupports from the liberty of varying their pleaſures at diſcretion, and of ſeeing now and then an *Italian* opera or a *French* comedy. When our ſtage cannot ſuſtain a compariſon with either of theſe, it may be ſaid to be faln indeed!

As for thoſe who eſpouſe, even riotouſly, the part of the *Engliſh* ſtrollers, and, againſt all law, or juſtice, carry their violent prejudice ſo far, as to diſturb an audience, aſſembled to hear a *French* comedy acted; is it an unfair queſtion to aſk of them, If they were quietly ſitting at an entertainment, exhibited by any ſtrolling company, at any of the theatres, ſuch as in *James-ſtreet*, the *Haymarket*, or any other; and a ſet of gentlemen was to preſume to trouble, or interrupt them, upon any pretext whatever; would not they, and juſtly too, reſent it? Would not they exclaim, that nobody had a right to preſcribe laws to their taſte and liking; and that the greateſt man in *England* had no authority to control, invade, or diſturb their pleaſure?—That they paid for what entertainment they liked beſt; and that they

were not to be dictated to where, and how they laid out their money.——That, if they were in any wrong, the law of the land was open, which alone has the power over all public diverſions; and forbids all moleſtation, or interruption, but what itſelf authoriſes: upon ſuch pleas, I ſay, would any one be blamed or cenſured for repulſing violence by violence, and defending a privilege which every free-born ſubject is entitled to, from the higheſt to the loweſt?

Yet this, and no more than this, was made a ſerious matter of offence, and charged againſt a young nobleman, as if he had thereby given juſt cauſe of complaint to his electors: nay, it was urged, that he appeared in arms againſt them. But, had his lordſhip really drawn his ſword, to protect himſelf in a privilege and liberty which the meaneſt ſubject is entitled to, of gratifying ſurely an innocent pleaſure or curioſity. Can there be a groſſer affront offered to his electors, than to ſay he meant any offence to them? Could he, conſiſtently with the regard due to them, ſuppoſe that they were liſted, or formed into a party, to ſupport the intereſt that could be concerned in the iſſue of ſuch a riot, the ſtrolling intereſt? Could he, in ſhort, have ſo mean an opinion of their underſtandings, and of their knowledge of their own intereſt, as to ſuppoſe that any creditable houſe-keepers, and eſpecially tradeſmen, would take up the cudgels, for a cauſe ſo perfectly foreign to them; and in which, if they had

any intereſt at all, it was manifeſtly to ſupport an entertainment that was agreeable to a number of gentlemen. For to ſay that it ought not to be, is ſurely giving laws to the taſte of others, which they would think great inſolence in the greateſt of the nation to give to theirs.

That it is the intereſt then of tradeſmen in general to wiſh well to theſe public entertainments, nothing can be plainer; ſince the variety and expectation of them ſerve not only to attract the greater affluence of foreigners to this celebrated capital, but even to detain at home ſuch of our own countrymen as might otherwiſe carry part of their fortunes, at leaſt, abroad, and ſpend them in purſuit of thoſe pleaſures which ſhould be denied them here. By this means too, as every thing helps, by even the addition of theſe actors, or ſtrollers, call them as you pleaſe, and the affluence of foreigners drawn to this capital by thoſe public entertainments they are capable of ſharing in, the conſumption of the neceſſaries of life leſs or more encreaſed. Several of our own trades are employed, or benefited by them; and the more the public entertainments are frequented, the more lively is the circulation of money; and of money, which would otherwiſe, perhaps, be locked up, worſe ſpent, or which, at leaſt, the *Engliſh* ſtrollers would have a very ſmall chance to come in for a ſhare of: be it remarked, without offence to *Engliſh* tradeſmen, whom I beg leave to put on quite a different footing from them.

Nay, it is no national partiality, much leſs a falſe deſigning compliment, but a real juſtice, evidently due to the *Engliſh* artificer, to allow, that they not only excel the *French*, but all nations whatever, in moſt of the uſeful branches of mechanics. With reſpect to *France* eſpecially, this is held and allowed ſo true, even by the *French* themſelves, that numbers of *Paris*-made goods are ſold there under the *London* ſtamp. This partiality there to our country is even carried ſo far, that, inſtead of prohibiting *Engliſhmen* from getting their bread, as has been moſt falſly inſinuated, even in the theatrical way, that one of their beſt, and moſt admired harlequins, was an *Engliſhman*, *Baxter* by name: and though, from our tongue not being ſo generally underſtood there, as theirs is here, there has been hitherto no real grounds for alledging, that the *French* have refuſed the *Engliſh* the opening a ſtage in that country, they give ſo favourable a reception to the *Engliſh* performers, in what they do underſtand, to wit, the pantomime and tumbling, that even natives of *Paris*, as *Dominique*, for example, in order to fill their houſes, are obliged to advertiſe themſelves as *Engliſh*, *les ſauteurs Anglois*.

It has been ſaid, indeed, that lately the *French* refuſed ſome *Engliſh*-born ſubjects, but all, or moſtly, ſons of *French* refugees, the permiſſion to act at *Paris*. But that refuſal was not made to them as *Britiſh* ſubjects; and it is moſt unfair and diſingenuous to pretend it. It was the piece they wanted to play, which was

objected

objected to: a moſt wretched, execrable tranſlation of the *Beggars Opera* into *French*, which had been played, and laughed at here: and the *French*, whoſe different taſte for ſtage-entertainments will not allow them to reliſh a piece of which highwaymen, thief-catchers, bawds and whores, compoſe the whole drama, refuſed to licenſe the acting it. It is not, in ſhort, from characters like theſe that they could accept leſſons of virtue. In this, however, though we may *pity* their taſte, we cannot juſtly impute to any national prejudice this refuſal of that particular piece, and a piece in *French* too. Had thoſe adventurers applied for leave to act one of *Shakeſpear*'s, *Otway*'s, or *Congreve*'s, and had been rejected, the caſe might have been quoted with ſome ſhew of reaſon againſt the *French* comedians here.

But, of all the objections ſtated, and urged againſt the encouragement of theſe *French* ſtrollers, not one has had the appearance of weight equal to that of *Verax*, publiſhed in the *Daily Advertiſer* of the 15th of *December*, 1749, as follows:

"*SIR*,

"I would deſire all perſons who are for encouraging the FRENCH *ſtrollers*, to reflect ſeriouſly, that the old *Romans* uſed frequently to ſend their *language* before them (as harbingers) when they had a mind to conquer a country. I alſo entreat the ſame

"gentlemen

" gentlemen to meditate on the four *French* " lines following, which (I hope in God) will " not be prophetical with regard to our happy " iſland." *I am, Sir,*

Your moſt humble Servant,

VERAX.

The Speech of MARS to GALLIA, after the concluſion of a Peace with *France*.

TON etat n'auroit eu pour bornes que ton choix:
Et tu devois tenir pour aſſuré preſage,
*Voyant toute l'*Europe *apprendre ton langage,*
Que toute cette Europe *alloit prendre tes loix.*
Corneille Toiſon d'Or, au Prologue, Scene 2.

IMITATED.

THEN hadſt thou ſtretch'd thy empire at thy will,
There yet remains one happy *omen* ſtill,
As thy fam'd language is thro' *Europe* ſpoke,
All *Europe* gladly will receive thy yoke.

However, even this Objection, when examined into, vaniſhes into nothing: For ſure, unluckily for *Verax*, nothing can be *falſer*, both as to common-ſenſe and hiſtorical truth, than that the *Romans* ſent their language before them, as harbingers of their intended conqueſt. For, beſides the moral difficulties of inſinuating, much more of forcing, their language into free and independent nations; beſides,

beſides, I ſay, the unlikelihood of ſuch an expedient, hiſtory plainly informs us, that the *Romans* ſtudied the *Greek* language long before they conquered *Greece*, as indeed was more convenient for their purpoſe of penetrating to the heart of it, in order to ſubdue it, which they accordingly did. *Cato*, if I miſtake not too, the auſtere, tenacious *Cato*, after having long railed at that language, gave up the point at length, and was not aſhamed to learn it in his advanced age.

As to thoſe ridiculous verſes of *Corneille*, monuments of the fulſome adulation paid by the *French* poets of that age to otherwiſe a great monarch; but whom the acceptance of it ſhewed ſo little: How did the *Engliſh*, who were, from a principle of improvement, and the love of all arts and ſciences, as fond of the *French* language as they are now, reſent, or rather puniſh the inſolence of that vain nation? Not, moſt aſſuredly, by a hatred of the individuals that compoſe it; leſs yet by declaring war againſt a parcel of poor itinerant ſtage-players; but by treading in the foot-ſteps of their noble anceſtors; by beating them bravely in the field, by reducing that monarch to ſo low an ebb, that he had no aſſurance to ſave his kingdom, at the laſt gaſp, but what he borrowed from deſpair. If the *French* language was ſo dreadful as this *Verax* would impoſe it upon us for, How came it that in thoſe days, when moſt of our law-proceedings were carried on in the *French* language, the *Engliſh* arms

were

were never more terrible, or more ſucceſsful againſt that Nation? Let *Crecy*, *Agincourt*, *Ramellies*, *Blenheim*, &c. all atteſt this ſolemn truth.

Differing, however from *Verax* in my apprehenſions of any danger from ſuffering a few *French* players to make their profit of the *French* tongue, being enough underſtood in this great commercial capital, as to afford them the proſpect of audience ſufficient to defray, or ſupport them; I cannot but do juſtice to the ſpirit he writes from. He cannot be more ſenſible than I am of the preſent danger to this country, from that perfidious and ambitious nation, whoſe treaties of peace are rather inſidious ſuſpenſions from war, than tranſactions of friendſhip and good-faith. As a nation, the *French* cannot be too much diſtruſted, and of courſe deteſted by the *Engliſh*. But, would it not more reſemble the honour and ſpirit of our anceſtors, to unchain at once, and nobly let looſe the national reſentment upon them, in a ſerious, effectual war, than ſpend or evaporate it in this trifling, paultry; popular clamour againſt a few of the moſt inconſiderable of that nation, whom the public has done too much honour to, in taking ſo much notice of them as it has done? And, in truth, the ſcandalous buſtle made about them at the *Weſtminſter* election, can ſcarce deſcend to poſterity, but as an inſtance of the abuſe of liberty, rather than of a juſt and commendable zeal for it; a proof, in ſhort, of the degeneracy of the preſent from the antique ſpirit of this

once happy iſland: of the entire deſtruction of which, there exiſts not a more pregnant omen than that the common people of *England*, among whom was chiefly to be found the moſt real virtue, good-ſenſe, and patriotiſm, ſeem to have caught that contagious corruption of the heart which has long raged amongſt their ſuperiors; than which, nothing is ſo likely to breed that littleneſs of ſpirit, thoſe narrow, contracted prejudices againſt foreigners, which our anceſtors held in ſuch contempt and deteſtation, that no cauſe was ſo favourable to them as that of the ſtranger and orphan: ſince even ſo early as the *Magna Charta* of *England*, they provided in it againſt any injury to be done to private aliens reſiding here, even in time of war with the nation they were of.

This naturally leads me to acquaint you with the motives and occaſions of this company coming over here; the knowledge of which will, to all who love common juſtice, make the manager of it rather an object of the public protection than of the public reſentment.

In the month of *Auguſt* 1748, Mr. *Rich* through Mr. *Swinny*, then at *Paris*, applied to Mr. *Monette*, the manager, to know if he could negotiate for him a company of *French* comedians, and how much the expence of it would come to. The anſwer was, That it would take up a year's time to form ſuch a company, and that the charges would be about three thouſand pounds; but that Mr. *Monette* could not conduct ſuch an undertaking without

a contract of partnerſhip with Mr. *R*——. This propoſal then determined Mr. *Monette* to proceed to *London*, a few days after this overture. He was no ſooner arrived there, but he had a meeting with Mr. *R*——, in preſence of his friend Mr. *D*———, where it was agreed, and decided, that he ſhould engage a ſufficient number of actors; that the theatre at *Lincoln's-inn-fields* ſhould be taken for them; and that the charge ſhould be defrayed between Mr. *R*—— and Mr. *Monette*. Upon this reſolution, Mr. *Monette* wrote to *France*, to ſeveral actors there, and engaged himſelf for their ſalaries or appointments, to the depth of one thouſand pounds. About a month after, he had a ſecond meeting with Mr. *R*——, in the preſence of Mr. *A*——*d*: the former then told him, That he had altered his ſcheme of acting the *French* plays on the theatre at *Lincoln's-inn-fields*, to that of *Covent-garden*, where he would play them twice a week; and that he would find means to introduce this entertainment without offending the public. Mr. *Monette* agreed to this new diſpoſition; and, in conſequence thereof, wrote to all the players he had engaged in the ſeveral towns of *France*, to proceed to *Paris*, and from thence to continue their journey to *London*.

Some time after, Mr. *R*——, having conſulted his friends upon this undertaking, ſent him word that he would not be concerned in it, for fear it might prejudice him with the public.

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This unexpected retraction obliged him then to fall upon ſome expedient how to get clear of theſe engagements which Mr. *R*—— had thus involved, and deſerted him in. Upon this, he was adviſed to ſollicit a licenſe for the company he had thus formed, originally at Mr. *R*——'s requeſt, and a ſubſcription that might enable him to go through with what he had, but for him, never embarked in: and both were granted him.

Relying then, on the protection of the *Engliſh* laws, and on that liberty which extends not only to the natives, but to all foreigners without diſtinction, who come to this country, and claim the benefit of it; he proceeded to bring over his company, for whom he expected no other toleration than what is allowed to *Italian* ſingers, *Italian* comedians, *Dutch* jugglers, *Turkiſh* rope-dancers, or *Savoyard* raree-ſhowmen: and if all theſe are permitted, why not *French* comedians, *French* ſtrollers? Arriving at *London*, he opened his theatre, without the fear of any oppoſition, even from the mob, except however ſuch a mob as a pack of ſtrollers, or the ſons of *French* refugees, who had taken up that occupation, were capable of ſtirring up againſt them: and accordingly he found no interruption or moleſtation but from that quarter alone; and againſt them only, by way of ſelf-defence, and not againſt any perſons of credit, was that proviſion made, which has been with ſuch virulence and art ſo unjuſtly improved into matter of offence and clamour.

Reaſoning then, and reaſoning purely upon *Engliſh* principles, one may ſafely aver, that the boaſted liberty of this country has been a ſnare to this poor man, who could not, at leaſt, mean to offend that public he rather was to hope for the favour and ſupport of. If his opening his theatre was againſt the laws of the land, why not put thoſe laws in force againſt him? But if, on the contrary, depending on their protection, and their protection not purely and narrowly confined to the natives of the country, but equally extended to all ſubjects, whether born ſuch, or ſubjects from that local allegiance due from all foreigners for the time they are here; what had he to fear, but the falſe and unjuſt prejudices of only the loweſt of mankind? For it would have been the greateſt impudence in him to imagine they could ever riſe higher, or that ever ſuch a trifling law-concern as his would have been ſo far dignified, as to be uſed towards making or unmaking a number of the *Britiſh* parliament. This indignity was reſerved for theſe wretched times.

And indeed it is not he who is the worſt uſed in this prevalence of a miſguided mob over the liberty of this land. Nothing is ſo notorious, than that the learning of the *French* language obtains a place amongſt other points of the education of youth. As well might the mob oppoſe this, as a ſlight put upon the *Engliſh* language, which has, however, been as greatly improved and enriched by the judicious naturalizing of foreign expreſſions, as our country has been by its hoſpitality

lity to, and reception of, foreigners. If then the concourſe of ſtrangers, and the deſire of ſuch of the nobility and gentry as are maſters of that language, have encouraged a ſet of players from that nation to divert them in it; is this ſuch a crime? Is liberty any thing but a name, if the prejudices of the loweſt part of the people, and people who plainly do not underſtand their own intereſt, and are only made the tools of deſigning men, can hinder the natural-born defenders of the public liberty from enjoying the private one of amuſing themſelves with an entertainment, entirely inoffenſive in itſelf, and tending to cultivate or perfect them in a language, now grown into ſuch general uſe, that even our meaneſt tradeſmen, when they can afford it, have it taught to their children? Nor quite without a reaſon; for tho' its beauties are far from ſuperior to thoſe of our own, they are different ones, and ſuch as no *Engliſhman* need be aſhamed of adding to the knowledge of his own language, any more than the *Romans* were of learning that of *Greece*, both *before*, and, what is more, *after* they had conquered it, without ever allowing it a ſuperiority to their own, but without too an inſenſibility to thoſe beauties in it, which no revolution of dominion, or length of time, have had, or probably will ever have, power over.

And here, Sir, I conclude, with this candid proteſtation, that if any argument or expreſſion in the foregoing can be conſtrued into the defence of a preference of foreigners to our own countrymen, I retract and diſclaim it. All I

here

here mean or intend, is, to defend the general extenſion of *Britiſh* liberty upon truly *Britiſh* principles, and thoſe only. Such as are for contracting it to a narrower bottom than our anceſtors founded it upon, are ſurely more its enemies than friends.

As to our tradeſmen, I repeat it, I hope they will conſtantly have the juſt Spirit to refuſe their votes and intereſt to ſuch as ſhall cheriſh and encourage foreigners in any invaſion of their birthright, or employ them, in wrong of their juſter pretenſions.

And as to even our *Engliſh* ſtrollers, it would be hard to ſuppreſs or diſcourage them, was it for no other reaſon, than that they may be looked on as nurſeries of actors for the two licenſed theatres; yet ſurely they ought not to expect more than to be connived at, and tolerated within good behaviour, nor to be more advantageouſly diſtinguiſhed than the honeſt tradeſman and mechanic. They ought not to ſet the dice upon their ſuperiors, and pretend an excluſive privilege of cramming their traſh down the throats of the nobility and gentry, whom they modeſtly require, upon their accounts, to be debarred the liberty of ſeeing a *French* comedy, and why not as well an *Italian* opera? without their leave and permiſſion; the impudence and abſurdity of which are ſo evident, that the wonder is, how any ſenſible, thinking people could be ſo hurried away by a popular cry, as to give it any weight or ſanction, by their joining and ſupporting it. But if theſe laſt, and to them only is this fair appeal addreſſed,

have

have been deceived into this paſſion, on a return to reaſon and themſelves, they will think their indignation and reſentment more juſtly due to ſuch as have ſo much abuſed very plauſible and worthy motives, as to make them ſerve party-purpoſes, and are blameable in nothing ſo much, as for a procedure that aims at deſtroying liberty by liberty, and ſetting up the government of the mob, inſtead of that of the laws.

Let truth then prevail, as truth is above being of any party; and eſpecially may thoſe clear-ſpirited *Engliſhmen*, who deteſt corruption, and ſincerely profeſs the eſpouſal of the welfare and liberties of this nation, never ſtain ſo glorious a cauſe, by deſcending to any mean and unworthy arts, better left, with contempt and diſdain, to the more proper patrons of them, their opponents!

I am,

SIR,

Yours, &c.

THE END.

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